



Focus

Legal Authority – Vessel Oil Spill Prevention and Response

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) is authorized to regulate vessels transiting Washington state waters, as set forth in state law (the Revised Code of Washington, RCW). For complete copies of the Washington state laws and regulations (Washington Administrative Codes, WACs), please call our office at (360) 407-7455. We will provide copies to your agent or bring a copy when boarding your vessel. These rules are also on Ecology's Web page at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/laws-rules/laws-etc.html>

Jurisdiction

Washington state pollution prevention and marine safety laws and rules apply to most commercial vessels transiting Washington's waters. State waters extend from the international boundary with Canada south to the Columbia River. Dry cargo and passenger vessels 300 gross tons or larger are subject to Ecology's rules governing pollution prevention and marine safety. All vessels are subject to Washington laws and rules governing oil spill response and cleanup.

Vessel Contingency Plans ([WAC 317-10](#))

Dry cargo and passenger vessels 300 gross tons or larger and all tank vessels must be covered by an oil spill contingency plan on file with Ecology or must obtain coverage under an umbrella plan. These plans must designate a primary response contractor certified by Ecology and demonstrate the ability to respond to a worst-case spill. Vessels must carry a copy of their contingency plan field document, with contacts to call in case of a spill.

Screening for Substantial Risk ([WAC 317-30/31](#))

Dry cargo and passenger vessels 300 gross tons or larger that enter Washington waters are subject to screening to determine whether the vessel may pose a potential risk of harm to the marine environment or to public health and safety. Vessels are screened by analyzing publicly available information, through boarding, or both. Ecology may board and inspect vessels if initial screening indicates a potential risk of harm or if not enough information is available to make an initial determination.

Bunkering (WAC 317-40)

Vessels bunkering in Washington state must comply with the state's bunkering regulations. This rule emphasizes the importance of proper procedures, communication, and monitoring before, during, and after bunkering operations. Ecology vessel inspectors may board your vessel to check compliance with Washington's bunkering procedures when you are in state waters.

Oil Spill Response and Clean-up (RCW 90.56.280)

If you have an oil spill of any size in Washington waters, you must immediately contact the Washington State Division of Emergency Management at 800-258-5990 **and** the National Response Center at 800-424-8802.

If you have special accommodation needs, contact Mariann Cook Andrews at (360) 407-7211 (voice) or (360) 407-6006 (TDD).